

Many young women experience unplanned pregnancies that lead to single parenting. While everyone's circumstances may be different, single parenting is something you share in common. Caring for a baby is more than just feeding or diapering them. Your child will have lots of needs—emotional, physical, and intellectual. And she will be relying on you to provide everything for her.

Basic Needs

Shelter - What will your living situation be after you have your baby? It is important that you and your baby have a safe, secure, and affordable place to live. There are many ways to accomplish this. You can:

- Live with your parents or with another family member.
- You can live in an apartment.
- Or you can live with a friend, perhaps even another single mom.

Income - In order to live, you will need a source of income. You may need to buy gas for a car or pay for transportation. You will likely have to pay for rent, utilities, food, clothing, insurance, and more. According to babycenter.com, it costs about \$150,000 to raise a child. A job is a great way to earn money and provide all your child's needs. Here are a few ways you can find a job:

- Classified Ads in Your Local Newspaper
- Temporary Agencies
- Word of Mouth
- Cold Calls
- "Help Wanted" Signs
- Online Employment Sites

Food - It is important to have healthy food. Without it, you will not have the energy to work and take care of your baby. The federal government provides the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. This program provides food, nutrition, counseling, and access to health services to low-income women, infants, and children. So healthy, nutritious food is available to you if you qualify. To find out how to apply, go to your state's website to find out how to set up an appointment. Food pantries are also a good place for help with food.

Emotional Needs

We are born with a need to connect with other humans. We need and value our friendships and relationships. As a parent, you have to be smart about your friendships and relationships. It is important to have good, encouraging friendships. Friends are part of your support team. However, they need to be friends who will encourage you as a mom, and treat your baby with love.

Dating

Dating is difficult when you're a single mom. It is important to remember that children form deep bonds with people who are constant in their lives. Make sure the man to which you are committing to is also committed to your child and sees you both as a package deal. Make sure he understands appropriate discipline and an appropriate way to show affection to you and your child. Never leave your child alone with someone you're dating whom you don't know extremely well. Set up careful boundaries with the people you date.

Baby's Emotional Needs

Attention - Babies need your attention. They bond with you through touch, snuggling, eye contact, and when you meet their needs.

Approval, Affirmation, and Acceptance - They need to know that mistakes are okay and don't affect your love and acceptance of them. They need acceptance as they begin learning new skills.

Security and Structure - Babies feel secure when you respond to their needs quickly.

Comfort - Your comforting arms and presence help her to feel secure in this big world in which she lives.

Unconditional Love - Your baby needs to know that no matter what she does you will love her.

Boundaries - She needs loving rules to govern her behavior and activities.

Appropriate Physical Affection - She needs to learn stranger danger, and that she owns her own body. A child also needs to know that if she feels insecure around anyone or doesn't want someone to touch her, her wishes will be respected.

Appropriate Discipline - Children need planned and thought-out discipline. Children need to understand rewards for good behavior and consequences for poor choices.

Consistency - Routines that they can count on, limits that don't constantly change, and consistent, well-thought-out discipline helps a child to feel secure and safe.

Intellectual Needs

Intellectual needs are things like learning and education. You may feel like it's impossible right now to attend school but many schools offer grants for single moms. It's important to at least complete your high school education. Many colleges offer online classes which means that you attend college from home using just your computer.

Your Child's Intellectual Needs

Children have intellectual needs as well. Babies develop through play and exploration of their environment. They don't need expensive toys, but rather a variety of experiences, such as different shapes and textures different colors, sounds, and lights. Music is also great for your child's development. Read to your child to help her develop language. Set up play dates and create a safe environment that is free of choking hazards and other dangers.

How to Make It All Work

I'm sure you can see there is a lot to think about as you prepare to go it alone. So, how do you make it all work? The answer is, by planning and setting goals. Start planning by creating lists. Consider your immediate needs first and make a plan.

Referenced works:

Schulman, Karen. "The High Cost of Child Care Puts Quality Care out of Reach for Many Families. Issue Brief" (2000), Accessed: 20, July, 2016.

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